Chapter 1 DI/UBD

Chapter 1 presented a lot of information about UBD and DI, what they are, and why they are so important to each other. Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design affect how, what, where, and who we teach so that we can reach the goal of helping each student learn in their own way. Personally, it was really hard for me to read this chapter because I feel it was very unorganized. It jumps from one subject to another or to an example and without any warning. In this chapter, different axiom’s are identified and scenario’s on how to fulfill these axioms were presented, which I thought was very interesting and helpful. Axiom one is so straight forward and obvious that I am surprised it was even presented, of course the goal of curriculum is to deepen understanding, which is the purpose of education itself. Axiom two is something that also kind of shocked me, because while it seems to be so honest and again, obvious, I realized that many teachers do not take the time to watch students apply the knowledge, they simply teach it and move on. Axiom four is something that I am worried about as a teacher, reacting to students who need more time as well as students who need more to do. I am a strong fighter against busy work, but I am worried that as a teacher I will not be able to come up with something for a student to do that is useful and not too stressful, because that student may see it as unfair that they are doing more work than the others, even if their work time is the same. Overall, these axioms and DI/UBD will strongly affect my classroom, since modern day techniques revolve around them, I just have to learn how to implement them.

Chapter 2 DI/UBD

Chapter 2 focused a lot on adapting teaching methods and assignments to fit student needs. I believe that the most important part of this chapter was Figure 2.1. It really opened my eyes to the many different variables that affect how a student learns. I knew that there were many of them, but I never really considered there to be this many, it was quite shocking. Each of my students will have different pieces of each of these “category[s] of student variance[s],” and at different levels as well, and it will affect how they learn, how they behave in school, and how they get their homework done. It just really blew my mind to see and read all of these differences. Another very interesting subject of this chapter was challenging students. I whole heartedly agree that every student needs some challenge or else they will not further themselves, they will simply get comfortable in their current level of intelligence, creativity, etc. Yet, I feel like some teachers take it over board, and give a student too much challenge, which has the opposite effect. On page 21, the idea that “rubrics can provide space for students to add personal goals for success” was presented, which I found to be a great idea. I hope I can remember this, because I feel like having students write down their goal on the rubric and then return it to me so that I can give them points on how they achieved their goal or worked towards their goal would be a great and motivating idea.

Chapter 3 DI/UBD

Chapter 3 focused a lot on lessons designed backward. While the book previously had mentioned it, this was the first time I could finally get a hold on what it was and understand how to use it. It seems to be a great idea, starting with what you wish to convey to the students, figuring out how you will determine if they have in fact picked up on it, and then planning the lessons/unit. I believe that this is a good way to plan ahead, especially for one’s first year as a teacher, since there are so many standards and concepts to cover and other obstacles to jump through, as well as a good idea for returning teachers to consider while modifying their lessons. Although I do not agree with the term “sins” for problems with activities and coverage, I do agree that they exist and in the way described in the chapter. It seems to me that backwards planning would in fact help avoid these problems. While I don’t have to worry so much about the “activity sin,” where teachers focus to much on applying the knowledge to the activity and not the activity to the knowledge, I do have to worry about the “coverage sin,” especially being a social studies teacher. There is always so much to teach and not as much time to teach it. Especially if I do become an AP teacher, since the school year is about a month shorter than standard history classrooms.

Chapter 4 UBD/DI

Chapter 4 is loaded with so much information it was hard to absorb it all! The center theme was how to plan lessons and manage the classroom so that it would encourage and foster student success. It discouraged and both encouraged an array of activities, and gave guidelines for what teachers should do so that they can teach their students as effectively as possible. Teaching in a differentiated classroom requires a lot of focus on goals and modes of teaching; the educator needs to figure out multiple ways to teach the students, that way if one mode is not working, they can try out another one. The educator also needs to make time to help students, because a good teacher knows that the most important thing is that their student is learning and does not get left behind. In order to do this in my future classrooms, I will need to set aside time to work with students one on one that way I can understand where they are in their learning in general as well as in my classroom. I will also need to come up with multiple ways to assess student learning, and to teach lessons that way they reach all of the different intelligences and levels of understanding among the students. Also, I will need to embrace as well as have the students embrace their own differences, and let those differences shine and be beneficial to the classroom, that way no student feels left out or not as intelligent as the other students.

Chapter 5 UbD/DI

Chapter 5 of UbD focuses a lot on the different forms of assessment, including---, as well as the different types of educational goals: declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, and dispositions. It also delves into the six facets of learning: explaining, interpreting, applying, having perspective, being empathetic, and having self-knowledge. All of these concepts combine to create mastery. This chapter encourages multiple forms of assessment, including more than just tests and essays, that way we can figure out if the students honestly have mastered these concepts of the subject. It also encourages explaining concepts in a real world way, showing students how to apply it literally, and even assessing them through a literal means. My high school geometry teacher assessed us in this way by having us group together and develop ways to build picnic tables. We planned our ideas out, chose three out of the six of the class, and then we cooperated with the shop class to build them. We sold them to raise money for our school, and in order to do this, we had to figure out how much each table cost to build and paint, and then we incorporated profit.

Another subject covered within this chapter is inauthentic vs. authentic work. Inauthentic work is just like drills, practicing math solutions, etc. Authentic work includes things such as research, debate, investigation, etc. A frame that is useful for teachers to use to make sure that work is authentic and actually useful is the GRASPS Frame, which involves 6 factors: goal setting, establishing a role for the student, and authentic audience, a real world situation in which to apply, work by students that is collective to the information, and that includes the standards for rating success. This could help a teacher such as I make sure that the work is not busy work, that it is not boring, and that it encourages actual thinking and learning rather than just practice and memorization.